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## Marriage Strategies and Social Prestige of Barber-Surgeons in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg: A Quantitative Evaluation of Marriage- and Probate Inventories

*Dominik Groß\**

**Abstract:** Although barber-surgeons made an essential contribution to the medical treatment in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany, there is an evident lack of literature about their living conditions. This article examines the social estimation of the last generations of barber-surgeons in the Kingdom of Württemberg. For this, 510 marriage- and probate inventories of the so-called *Wundärzte* and their wives were evaluated. It could be proven that the majority of the marriage partners came from craftsman's milieu. Separate evaluations of the assets of both the husbands and their wives led to remarkable results: On the average, the wives' marriage portions turned out to be more than twice as high as their husbands'. Supposing that dowry and decent of the wives are related to the social estimation of their partners, we have to conclude that contemporary barber-surgeons still enjoyed quite a high prestige. Most of them succeeded in marrying upwards – at least in economical respect. Thus, the barbers' practice of marriage has to be looked upon as an example for Social heterogamy.

### 1. Introduction

In recent years many studies have focussed on the rise of physicians to professional status in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to this, less

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emphasis has been laid on non-academic healers such as barber-surgeons and midwives. Yet one has to allow for the fact that at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany, the university educated physicians were outnumbered by the exponents of barber-surgery. In Württemberg, in 1819 still 1176 barber-surgeons stood opposite to merely 287 physicians.<sup>2</sup> Far into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, medical attention in Germany mainly rested on the representatives of barber-surgery and on different types of folk healers. The licensing of barber-surgeons to medical practice was not stopped until 1873.<sup>3</sup> The last exponent of German barber-surgery, Wilhelm Mayer from Stuttgart, died in 1931.<sup>4</sup>

Although barber-surgeons made an essential contribution to the medical treatment in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has to be stated that there is almost no pertinent literature to illuminate their fields of work and their way of living.<sup>5</sup> The aim of the present study is to shed light on the living-conditions of the last generations of barber-surgeons in Württemberg. After outlining the legal framework of barber surgery<sup>6</sup>, a special emphasis will be given to the marriage strategies, social prestige and the properties of that kind of healers. The study is based on a type of archival documents that is considered to be an “extraordinarily valuable historical source”<sup>7</sup>: the so-called marriage- and probate inventories.

In Württemberg, those inventories were regularly drawn up on the occasion of marriage and death.<sup>8</sup> From the Thirty Years’ War up to the introduction of the civil Code in 1900, almost all inhabitants of Württemberg were obliged to expose their assets.<sup>9</sup> As to the questions in view, marriage inventories (*Beibringen*) of contemporary barber-surgeons and their wives have to be looked upon

<sup>1</sup> For a general view, cf. Freidson (1970); Sarfatti-Larson (1977). For Germany see, for example, Huerkamp (1985); Drees (1988); Groß (1994); Jütte (1997).

<sup>2</sup> Groß (1997), p. 78. For the “important function” of “half-doctors” in South Germany see also Lee (1980), especially pp. 82-3.

<sup>3</sup> See Weiss/Specker/Winckelmann (1983), pp. 1005-10; Sander (1987), pp. 92-3; Groß (1996b), p. 459.

<sup>4</sup> Groß (1996a), pp. 232-34.

<sup>5</sup> For pilot resp. preliminary studies about barber-surgery in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg see Sander (1987) and Groß (1996a-c, 1997). For customary medicine and barber-surgery in early modern Germany see Stürzbrecher (1969); Jütte (1989); Sander (1989), pp. 110-341; Wessling (1991), pp. 21-43.

<sup>6</sup> For details see Weiss/Specker/Winckelmann (1983); Groß (1996a-c, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Mannheims/Ruth (1984), p. X. For a general view, see also van der Woude/Schuurman (1980); Sabeau (1990), esp. pp. 183-246; Groß (1998).

<sup>8</sup> Marriage inventories were called ‘Beibringen’ or ‘Zubringen’ or just simply Inventur (inventarium allatorum). Probate inventories were called ‘Teilungen’; they were used to divide up a property. For the significance of ‘Inventuren und Teilungen’ in Germany see Borscheid (1978 and 1982); Schraut (1989), pp. 339-45; Borscheid (1985), pp. 6-11.

<sup>9</sup> Officials insisted that complete accounts of family property were made at several points in the course of a marriage. To the legal Background of the inventories see ‘Abschied vom 30. Juni 1821, die Organisation der Gemeinde-Verfassung, der Oberamts-Verfassung, die Rechtspflege, das Notariats-Edikt und die Kreis-Stellen betreffend’, *Regierungsblatt für das Königreich Württemberg* 1821, 50, pp. 469-89. See also Frischlin (1605). Sabeau (1990), pp. 187-93.

as revealing documents: Besides giving information about the total amount of the assets at the time of marriage, the inventories also supply details about the immovable property, the movable assets, the credits and the debits of the marriage partners. Further attention has to be paid to the fact that the property of each spouse was specified separately.<sup>10</sup> By that, the spouses' assets can be directly compared. In addition to this, marriage inventories ordinarily supply many biographical and genealogical information such as the occupation of the spouses' father respectively father-in-law. Marriage inventories were used as an evidence of ownership, especially in case of divorce or insolvency, but also as the basis of division of an estate.<sup>11</sup> In addition to this, in times of restrictions of marriage it was also looked upon as a proof of the required amount of assets.

Disregarding the fact that the evaluation of inventories takes up a great deal of time<sup>12</sup>, those archival documents meet almost all expectations to be placed. Supposing that the social decent and the marriage portion of the barbers and their fiancées correspond to the rating of barber-surgeons on the marriage market, inventories are expected to give relevant information about the social prestige and economical status of contemporary barber-surgery.

## 2. Barber-Surgeons in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg

In 1814, a law was enacted that repealed the former distinction between the Barbier (barber, *chirurgus purus*) and the minor Bader (bathkeeper, *chirurgus impurus*). Instead of this, general instructions were given to establish four categories of the so-called *Wundärzte*.<sup>13</sup> The classification of the candidates into different categories was based on the result of one's examination for the master's certificate. The admission to the examination depended on furnishing evidence of a successful three-years apprenticeship and a subsequent four-years journeymanhip.<sup>14</sup> Whereas the well-skilled exponents of the first category

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<sup>10</sup> As soon as the marriage partners were joined, they received rights in the other's dowry.

<sup>11</sup> In case of the death of at least *one* marriage partner it was looked upon as a proof of the hereditary titles of the bereaved.

<sup>12</sup> Each individual inventory contains a multitude of data which is not easy to handle. For a systematic evaluation, you have to apply statistical methods. That is why the analysis of larger quantities of inventories became feasible only after the development of computers. Apart from this, in some archives those documents have not yet been made accessible. For details see Drees (1988), pp. 20-1, Schraut (1989), pp. 339-45.

<sup>13</sup> Weiss/Specker/Winkelmann (1983), pp. 1005-10; Sander (1987), pp. 87-128; Groß (1996), pp. 459-73.

<sup>14</sup> See 'General-Verordnung, die Organisation der Zunftverfassung der Wundärzte betreffend vom 25. April 1814', *Regierungsblatt für das Königreich Württemberg* 1814, 20, pp. 173-78, especially p. 176. In 1930, the prescriptions concerning minimum duration of the period of training were modified. For details see 'Königliche Verordnung, betreffend die Abstufungen in der Ermächtigung zur Ausübung der WundArznei-Kunde vom 8. November

were licensed to all kind of surgical treatments, the less qualified representatives of the fourth category were restricted to minor surgical therapies such as blood-letting and the extraction of teeth.<sup>15</sup>

Far into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most physicians resided in urban districts. In the country, medical attention was mainly supported by barber-surgeons and non-licensed practitioners. The small number of doctors in rural regions, a distinct social disparity between physicians and countrymen, the remarkably high fees of the academic medical men and the doubtful superiority of the doctor's therapies still prevented physicians from being in great demand.<sup>16</sup> In the second third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of physicians began to grow remarkably. Consequently, an increasing number of doctors demanded on a further subordination or even elimination of the *Wundärzte* by pointing at their putatively poor medical and surgical skills.<sup>17</sup> Although the field of work of those barbers was repeatedly restricted, the legislator of Württemberg still held on to barber-surgery. In 1873, the last non-academic candidates were licensed to surgery. In the following decades, the number of practicing *Wundärzte* decreased continuously.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Social and Economical Status of barber-surgeons in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg on the basis of inventories

As to the marriage strategy and social life of non-academic healers in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany, there still is a remarkable lack of pertinent literature. Although in recent years an increasing number of historians have used marriage inventories<sup>19</sup>, none of the disposable publications deals with the group of barber-surgeons.<sup>20</sup> The few disposable hints concerning the *Wundärzte* are often not well-founded, but based on speculation. For example, Andreas Maisch mentions two barber-surgeons who deserted their wives in the village of Bondorf. By hinting at those two cases and a similar instance in the small town of Nürtingen<sup>21</sup>, Maisch imputes that the occupational group of barber-surgeons distinguished itself by committing adultery.<sup>22</sup>

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1830', *Regierungsblatt für das Königreich Württemberg* 1830, 50, pp. 443-57, especially p. 450.

<sup>15</sup> See note 14 above.

<sup>16</sup> See Drees (1988), pp. 44-5.

<sup>17</sup> See Anonymus (1849), passim; Drees (1988), pp. 50-5.

<sup>18</sup> Groß (1977), pp. 78-9.

<sup>19</sup> For marriage strategies in general see Bourdieu (1976), pp. 117-44; Medick/Sabean (1984); Borscheid (1982), pp. 227-62; Medick (1996), pp. 314-36.

<sup>20</sup> For the barber-surgeons in the 18<sup>th</sup> century see Sander (1989), pp. 110-34. For the physicians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century see Drees (1988), pp. 234-77.

<sup>21</sup> Borscheid (1985), p. 105.

<sup>22</sup> Maisch (1992), pp. 406-7 (footnote nr. 52 *ibid.*).

The present study tries to shed light on the background of marriage of barber-surgeons in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg. By comparing the marriage inventories with the corresponding examination documents it becomes evident that most of the *Wundärzte* entered into marriage shortly after their master's examination.<sup>23</sup> In other words, marriage was more or less coincident with the examination for the master's diploma. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, barber-surgeons married at the age of 30 years on an average. In the middle of the century, they ordinarily entered into marriage at the age of 28 years. These results correspond with the data that are known about contemporary artisans: With regard to craftsmen, Andreas Maisch found out an average marriage age of 27,3 to 29,3 years.<sup>24</sup> Hans Medick also came to the conclusion that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the inhabitants of Laichingen – a small town dominated by weavers and peasants – entered into marriage at the age of 27 to 29 years.<sup>25</sup> A similar marriage age was reckoned out regarding contemporary factory workers.<sup>26</sup>

A special interest should also be taken in the social origin of the surgeons' wives. For that reason, the occupations of the wives' fathers were subjected to a stratification pattern. To contrast the descent of both *Wundärzte* and their wives, it seemed to be suitable to oppose the occupations of the husbands' fathers to those of their wives. For that comparison, all over Württemberg 164 marriage inventories of *Wurzelärzte* were evaluated (table 1).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Inventuren und Teilungen (n=186). Inventories of the following archives were evaluated: Aalen, Altensteig, Asch, Blaubeuren, Backnang, Bad Waldsee, Balingen, Besigheim, Biberach, Bietigheim, Buttenhausen, Dornstetten, Ebingen, Ehingen, Essingen, Esslingen, Giengen a. d. Brenz, Göppingen, Herrenberg, Heubach, Horb, Isny, Justingen, Kirchheim/Teck, Kornwestheim, Künzelsau, Langenau, Laupheim, Ludwigsburg, Maichingen, Bad Mergentheim, Münsingen, Munderkingen, Nagold, Neckarsulm, Neuenstein, Niedernhall, Nürtingen, Oberndorf a. N., Ravensburg, Riedlingen, Reutlingen, Rottenburg a. N., Rottweil, Rudersberg, Schelklingen, Schorndorf, Schrozberg, Schwäbisch Hall, Sindelfingen, Stuttgart (including Cannstatt, Degerloch, Feuerbach, Hedelfingen, Obertürkheim, Untertürkheim, Weil im Dorf), Tettnang, Trossingen, Tübingen, Tuttlingen, Untergröningen, Untermünkheim, Urbach, Vaihingen/Enz, Waiblingen, Waldtann, Wangen, Weingarten, Wurmlingen. For the calculation of the average examination see Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg (StAL) E 162 1, Bü 603, 606a, 607-13 (examination reports of barber-surgeons) as well as StAL E 162 11, Bü 912-1647 (personal files of barber-surgeons).

<sup>24</sup> Medick (1996), p. 319.

<sup>25</sup> Maisch (1992) studied the living-conditions and life-styles in different villages of Württemberg: p. 237.

<sup>26</sup> See Borscheid/Schomerus (1977), p. 222.

<sup>27</sup> For the social origin of barber-surgeons see also Groß (1996c), especially pp. 41-50.

*Table 1: Social origin of barber-surgeons and their wives in 19th-century Württemberg by evaluating their fathers' occupations (1800-1899)\**

<i>Social stratum</i> (occupation)	Fathers of the wives		Fathers of the barber- surgeons	
	nominal	percentage	nominal	percentage
<i>University graduates, high officials, civil servants</i>	3	3	1	1
<i>Liberal professions</i>	2	2	2	2
<i>Traditional middle class</i>	93	80	92	88
of that:				
farmers, peasants	5	4	2	2
traders, merchants	8	7	4	4
craftsmen**	60	52	81	77
local notabilities	5	4	3	3
foresters	2	2	0	0
administrators	1	1	0	0
wine-growers	1	1	0	0
landlords and brewers	11	9	2	2
<i>New middle classes:</i>	13	11	6	6
<i>Lower classes:</i>	5	4	4	4
<i>total</i>	116	100	105	101***

\* Inventuren und Teilungen (n=164). For further details see note 23 above.

\*\* Including barber-surgeons.

\*\*\* The total is more than 100 % because each single percentage was rounded out.

It is interesting to see that the majority of both the barber-surgeons and their wives came from a craftsman's milieu. 77 percent of the barbers' fathers and 52 percent of their fathers-in-law were craftsmen themselves. Analyzing the different occupations subsumed under the term of 'craftsmen', it can be shown that there are distinct differences: While 54 out of 105 fathers worked as barber-surgeons themselves, merely 10 out of 116 fathers-in-law earned their living by barber-surgery. 7 fathers-in-law, but none of the fathers worked as a butcher. 13 out of 116 fathers-in-law could be numbered to the so-called new middle classes such as country teachers and minor civil servants. Traders, landlords and brewers also appeared quite frequently (n=16). A mere minority of the marriage partners recruited from university graduates and from lower classes.

There is no doubt that the term of 'craftsmen' includes both financially weak exponents (e.g. stocking-knitter, basket-maker) and economically strong

occupations (e.g. jewellers and organ-builder).<sup>28</sup> Therefore we have to ask if there are remarkable disparities between the dowries of barber-surgeons and that of their wives. In other words: Did husbands and wives bring similar amounts of property to a marriage or was there a tendency for the male side to marry up or down? As has been said, marriage inventories supply detailed information about the common property as well as about the marriage portions of the spouses.<sup>29</sup> 186 inventories were analysed to gain information about the questions in view.<sup>30</sup>

The separate evaluation of the assets of both the husbands and their wives gave a surprise: On the average, the wives' marriage portion turned out to be twice as high as their husbands. Before 1850, the property of a barber-surgeon at the time of marriage amounted to 576 florins on the average. In contrast to this, their wives contributed no less than 1 185 florins to the common assets. To illustrate the purchase power of that sum of money, it might be instructive to refer to the price for a bushel of spelt: In 1850, a bushel of that kind of bread grain came to 5 florin.<sup>31</sup> Three bushels of spelt covered the requirements of one person for about one year.

In the second half of the century, the financial disparity even increased: after 1850, about 627 florins on the part of the barber-surgeons stood opposite to an average of 1685 florins on the side of their wives (table 2). The mentioned discrepancy turns out to be even more remarkable by looking at the *absolute number* of marriages with higher assets on the part of the wives (table 3).

In three out of four inventories, the wives' contributions to the assets far outweighed that of the husbands. Further attention has to be paid to potential trends in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Before 1850, 71 percent of the women contributed higher assets than their husbands. After 1850, that percentage increased to 82 percent. There is no doubt that, compared to other groups of *craftsmen*, barber-surgeons in general were rather well-to-do.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the average property of *physicians* exceeded that of barber-surgeons by far.<sup>33</sup>

As several studies prove, the mentioned ratio between the marriage portions of husband and wife cannot be considered representative for contemporary marriages in Württemberg. Generally, the properties of husbands and wives in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg were on a par. According to David Warren Sabean, "a substantial majority of couples brought more or less equal amounts of prop-

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<sup>28</sup> For details see Schremmer (1974), especially pp. 702-5.

<sup>29</sup> The assets consisted of own savings balance and dowry given by the parents of the spouses.

<sup>30</sup> Inventuren und Teilungen (n=186). For details see note 23 above.

<sup>31</sup> See Borscheid (1985), pp. 285-86.

<sup>32</sup> For details as to the property of artisans in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg see Borscheid (1985), p. 282; Borscheid (1985), pp. 191-94. For the average assets of barber-surgeons on the basis of probate inventories see also table 7.

<sup>33</sup> For the average assets of contemporary physicians see Drees (1988), p. 234.



erty to their marriages.”<sup>34</sup> After all, he found that “there was a systematic tendency for women to marry upward, but with no great leaps from relatively

*Table 2: Marriage portion of barber-surgeons and their wives in florins (Württemberg, 1800-1899)\**

Marriage portion of <i>barber-surgeons</i> in florins (1800-1899)		
Space of time	Number of inventories	Average assets
1800-1849	n=104	576
1850-1899	n= 82	627
<i>1800-1899</i>	<i>n=186</i>	<i>594</i>

  

Marriage portion of <i>their wives</i> in florins (1800-1899)		
Space of time	Number of inventories	Average assets
1800-1849	n=104	1185
1850-1899	n= 82	1695
<i>1800-1899</i>	<i>n=186</i>	<i>1372</i>

  

Assets of <i>the couples</i> in florins (1800-1899)		
Space of time	Number of inventories	Average assets
1800-1849	n=104	1761
1850-1899	n= 82	2322
<i>1800-1899</i>	<i>n=186</i>	<i>1966</i>

\* Inventuren und Teilungen (n=186). For details see note 23 above.

*Table 3: Comparison of the absolute amount of assets of barber-surgeons and their wives (Württemberg, 1800-1899)\**

Space of time	Number of documents	Higher assets on the part of the husband	Equal assets	Higher assets on the part of the wives
1800-1849	n=121	33	2	86
1850-1899	n= 65	12	0	53
<i>1800-1899</i>	<i>n=186</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>139</i>

\* Inventuren und Teilungen (n=186). For details see note 23 above.

poor to relatively rich.”<sup>35</sup> Similar results are referred by Borscheid<sup>36</sup> and Borscheidt.<sup>37</sup> Anja Borscheidt evaluated marriage inventories of the city of Nürtingen. According to the authoress, the average assets of the local craftsmen

<sup>34</sup> Sabeau (1990), p. 240.

<sup>35</sup> Sabeau (1990), p. 241.

<sup>36</sup> Borscheid (1978), pp. 233-34.

<sup>37</sup> Borscheidt (1985), pp. 190-92.

came to 730 florins, whereas that of their wives amounted to 639 Florins.<sup>38</sup> As to the physicians in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg, Annette Drees came to the conclusion that for the largest part there was no significant difference between the marriage portions of the spouses.<sup>39</sup> Only for the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the average property of the physicians did not quite come up to their wives'. But even then, the assets of the doctors still amounted to 40 percent of the common fortune on the average.<sup>40</sup>

Supposing that the dowry and the decent of the wives are related to the social estimation of the husband's occupation and reputation, one cannot but conclude that the contemporary *Wundärzte* still enjoyed a remarkably high prestige. Apparently the continuous attacks and defamation by the physicians could not strongly damage the current image of the last barber-surgeons.<sup>41</sup> As far as *Wundärzte* did not marry into a family of barber-surgeons, they ordinarily chose a partner that was wealthier or even socially superior. There was a strong tendency for barber-surgeons to marry upward – especially in economical respect. Thus one must attest them to have clear-sighted or even calculating politics of marriage. At last, the barbers' practice of marriage has to be looked upon as an example for social hypergamy.<sup>42</sup>

When analysing the peculiarities of the properties of both husbands and wives, we have to state a few disparities that do not only apply to the *amount* but also to the *structure* of the dowry. As to the *Wundärzte*, the immovables came to 49,1 percent of the whole assets. On the part of their wives, the immovable assets merely ran up to 15,7 percent (table 4).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the mentioned discrepancies even seemed to intensify: after 1850, the part of the immovables amounted to about 54 percent (husbands) resp. 15 percent (wives). The gross of the wives's assets were represented by the movables: They were valued at 68 percent, whereas the outstanding debts ran up to about 17 percent. The extraordinary rank of movables becomes even more evident when one admits that the average amount of the wives' assets was more than twice as high as their husbands'. Andreas Maisch underlines the special meaning of the movables among the wives' marriage portion by saying: "Typische Beibringensgüter der Frau waren ... Bettwerk, Leinwand, (Küchen-)Geschirr und eine Kuh."<sup>43</sup> As to the barber-surgeons' fiancés, a similar structure of assets can be found. In addition to

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<sup>38</sup> Benschmidt (1985), p. 191.

<sup>39</sup> Drees (1988), pp. 209-77.

<sup>40</sup> Drees (1988), pp. 260-61 (diagram *ibid.*).

<sup>41</sup> For the social prestige of barber-surgeons in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg See Sander (1989), pp. 125-34.

<sup>42</sup> The amount of marriage property pretty often turned out to be decisive for the start and the development of the occupational career. For this point see Borscheid/Schomerus (1977), pp. 215-16.

<sup>43</sup> Maisch (1992), p. 405: "Typical dowries of the wives were ... bedding, linen, (kitchen) stores and a cow" (translation by the author).

Maisch's statement, a high rank of cash among the movables of the wives has to be mentioned.

*Table 4: Structure of the assets of barber-surgeons and their wives at the time of marriage (Württemberg, 1800-1899)\**

Marriage partners	Space of time	Number of documents	Immovables	Movables	Credits
Husbands	1800-1849	n=104	44,7 %	44,4 %	10,9 %
	1850-1899	n= 60	53,7 %	36,0 %	10,3 %
	1800-1899	n=164	49,1 %	40,3 %	10,6 %
Wives	1800-1849	n=104	16,2 %	53,6 %	30,1 %
	1850-1899	n= 60	15,1 %	67,6 %	17,3 %
	1800-1899	n=164	15,7 %	60,0 %	24,3 %

\* Inventuren und Teilungen (n=164). For details see note 23 above.

Despite the considerable average amount of the couples' assets we have to decide each case on its own merits. While some barber-surgeons succeeded in huge increments of property, others sooner or later were reduced to poverty. Table 5 offers a division of all registered assets into different categories.

While 5,3 percent of the barber-surgeons were impecunious or even indebted, another 6,7 percent of the *Wundärzte* disposed of 10.000 florins or even more. Disregarding these extremes, we can state that one out of two barber-surgeons was provided with assets valued at 1000 to 4999 fl. Another 17 percent had 5000 to 9999 value worth of assets.

There are many reasons to explain the evident discrepancies in economical respect: regional and geographical influences have to be allowed for as well as potential fierce local competitors, personal inability or unforeseen (permanent) disablement.

Another possible explanation for indebtedness is an early death of some of the *Wundärzte*. It can be shown that the economical situation of barber-surgeons' widows in general progressively deteriorated. Although widows of barbers were allowed to engage a journeyman surgeon to "replace" the deceased husband, the assets often gradually decreased (table 6).<sup>44</sup> Detailed information about the average common assets of barber-surgeons and their wives is given in table 7. The average assets of the widows were remarkably low compared to the means of working barber-surgeons and their wives. Pretty

<sup>44</sup> See 'General-Verordnung', op. cit., note 14 above, pp. 174-75.

often, at the end of their lives those widows ran up debts or even became dependent on social welfare.

#### 4. Conclusions

This article establishes that the time of marriage of the *Wundärzte* more or less coincided with the examination for the master's diploma. In 19<sup>th</sup>-century Württemberg, barber-surgeons used to marry at the age of 28 to 30 years. As to the social descent of the barber-surgeons and their wives we have to state that the majority of the marriage partners came from the craftsman's milieu. 77 percent of the barbers' fathers and 52 percent of their fathers-in-law were craftsmen themselves.

Separate evaluations of the assets of both the husbands and their wives led to remarkable results: On the average, the wives' dowry was more than twice as high as their husbands'. Supposing that property and social descent of the wives are related to the social estimation of their partners, one cannot but conclude that contemporary barber-surgeons still enjoyed a considerably high prestige. The majority of the *Wundärzte* succeeded in marrying upwards – at least regarded economically. Therefore, the barbers' practice of marriage has to be looked upon as an example for social heterogamy. Usually, even continuous defamations by the physicians could not seriously damage the image of contemporary barber-surgery. Nevertheless not all barber-surgeons can be tarred with the same brush: While some couples succeeded in huge increments of property, others were reduced to poverty. There are many reasons to explain the disparities in financial respect: regional and geographical differences have to be mentioned as well as more or less fierce local competitions, personal inability, unforeseen disablement or an early death of the family man. It could be shown that the economical situation of Barber-surgeons' widows in general progressively deteriorated.

*Table 5: Dispersion of the amount of assets of barber-surgeons and their wives on the basis of marriage and probate inventories (Württemberg, 1800-1899)\**

	Amount of assets (in florins)					
	impecunious or indebted	1- 999 fl	1000- 2999 fl	3000- 4999 fl	5000- 9999 fl	10000- 19999 fl 20000 fl and more
num.	27	144	175	78	52	23
%	5,3	28,2	34,3	15,3	10,2	4,5

\* Inventuren und Teilungen (n=510). For details see note 23 above.

*Table 6: Assets of the widows of barber-surgeons in florins on the basis of probate inventories (Württemberg, 1800-1899)*

Space of time	Number of documents	Average assets	Standard deviation
1800-1849	n=26	1711	1533
1850-1899	n=31	2809	3011
1800-1899	n=57	2308	2492

*Table 7: Common assets of barber-surgeons and their wives on the basis of probate inventories (Württemberg, 1800-1899)*

Space of time	Number of documents	Average assets	Standard deviation
1800-1849	n=169	2182	2813
1850-1899	n=241	4581	7464
1800-1899	n=510	3316	4459

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